



THE ADVISOR

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Iraqi Police Commandos



Police Commandos
Conduct Operations
In Samarra and Mosul

March 12, 2005

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Iraqi Highway Patrol Stops Kidnappers; Hijackers

MNSTC-I Public Affairs

SOUTHERN, Iraq – Iraqi Highway Patrol officers in Dhi Qar recently thwarted a kidnapping and in two separate incidents, captured hijackers in Dhi Qar and Basra.

While attempting to make a traffic stop in the area of operation, Dhi Qar highway patrol officers shot the back tires of a vehicle that would not stop after it was signaled to pull over. The officers found two men and a boy in the vehicle.

The boy, who turned out to be the son of the mayor of Nasiriyah, was kidnapped by the two men who were demanding a \$30,000 ransom. The kidnappers were arrested, charged, and convicted of their crimes and are serving sentences of 10-20 years. The mayor of Nasiriyah lauded the

chief of the Iraqi Highway Patrol and the arresting officers for their efforts.

In addition, the highway patrol recently conducted a raid outside of Nasiriyah where they arrested 11 individuals suspected of hijacking and other crimes which include murder and larceny. Five of the arrested individuals were charged and convicted of more than 10 crimes and each sentenced to 20 years in jail.

In a separate incident in Basra, patrol officers conducted a checkpoint on the Tampa highway where they captured two additional hijackers. The hijackers were charged and convicted of their crimes which also included larceny and murder and were sentenced to 10 years in prison.



The 8th Mechanized Brigade, Iraqi Police, enters the city of Samarra to establish a show of force and to assist with the Ministry of Interior operation that led to the capture of more than 80 suspects. The brigade is still conducting patrols and setting up checkpoints in the city.

- Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Matt Murphy

Cover photo: An Iraqi Police Commando stops to play with a child while on patrol in Mosul in the Al Dawasa neighborhood.

— Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Lorie Jewell

Iraqi Troops Flush Samarra of Insurgents, Weapons

By U.S. Army Sgt. Matt Murphy — MNSTC-I Public Affairs

SAMARRA, Iraq – In the first three days of an anti-insurgent operation, Iraqi Security Forces netted 54 suspected insurgents, several vehicles, a weapons cache with 37 large mortar and artillery rounds, and an assortment of rifles and rocket launchers.

Sanctioned by the Ministry of Interior, the operation began March 4 with more than 1,500 Iraqi Security Forces personnel executing missions under the leadership of Gen. Adnan Thabit, security adviser to the ministry. A police commando brigade, two police commando battalions, a public order battalion, and local police made up the security forces contingency.

It was MOI's largest anti-insurgent operation since the battle for Fallujah in November 2004, officials said, and it was completely led and executed by Iraqi leaders and troops. A small contingent of U.S. military personnel was there to advise and observe. Police trainers with the U.S. Department of Defense were also there, watching from the rear as the police commandos swept the city and surrounding villages.



Iraqi Police Commandos handle mortar rounds from a weapons cache they found during a mission in villages outside Samarra.
- Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Matt Murphy

Several previous missions in Samarra, which has a reputation for being a safe-haven for insurgents, only pushed them to outlying areas and they eventually returned, officials said.

"Samarra is the contact point between north and the south of Iraq," said Adnan. "It is also the backyard of Fallujah. The civilians here are satisfied with the operation and now feel more secure," Adnan said.

Adnan's presence in the city with the security forces prompted non-stop telephone calls to his ministry office

from citizens who are either expressing appreciation or offering information about other insurgent activities and locations, officials said.

A former Samarra resident, Adnan knows the city and the surrounding area well. With the support of police commando leaders, Adnan laid out a plan for the operation that called

for a citywide curfew, have the security forces surround the city and flush the insurgents out. While several Iraqi security forces teams searched house-to-house in the inner city, other teams hit the villages in a staggered pattern and found several insurgents who are named on a target list.

Col. Jalil of the 1st Battalion, 1st Brigade Baghdad Police Commandos led the village operations. They set up traffic checkpoints where his troops apprehended suspects with two rocket-propelled grenade launchers in the trunk of their vehicle. They also confiscated a truck carrying a box of rocket-propelled grenades, small arms, and items commonly used to make improvised explosive devices, like detonation cable.

One of Adnan's teams captured suspects that led them to a small weapons cache consisting of 23 120mm mortar rounds and 13 155mm mortar rounds. Police commandos cleared the area so that a U.S. explosives team could destroy the rounds.

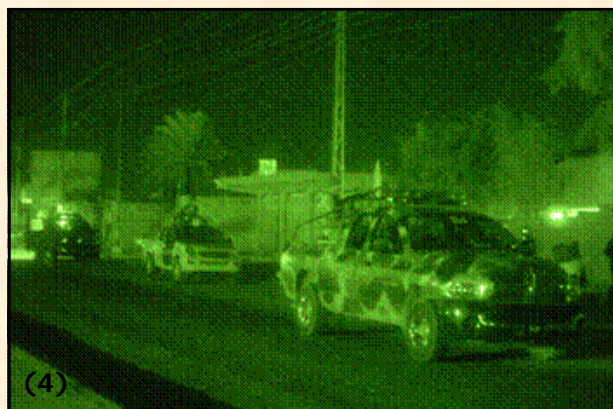
"I am very proud of the commandos and honored by the way these men do their jobs," Jalil said upon learning of the successful sweeps and the capture of the targeted suspect. The targeted suspect, believed to be a sniper who shot at the commandos, was taken to a detention center for processing, where Iraqi security forces fed the captured suspects.

No deaths or injuries among the Iraqi security forces were reported.



Iraqi Gen. Adnan Thabit, security adviser to the Ministry of Interior discusses operations with Iraqi Police Commandos in the field during missions outside Samarra.
- Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Matt Murphy

Iraqi Police Commandos on Patrol in Samarra and Mosul



- (1) Iraqi Police Commandos roll out on missions to Samarra's outlying villages.
- (2) A weapons cache with rocket propelled grenades, detonation cord, and a sniper rifle found by Iraqi Police Commandos in outlying village.
- (3) Two Iraqi police commandos kneel to take cover as the sound of gunfire erupts nearby during a foot patrol through Mosul.
- (4) Iraqi Police Commandos conduct night patrols in Samarra.
- (5) Iraqi Police Commandos talk with citizen in Samarra.
- (6) Iraqi Police Commandos pause to examine lines of vehicles passing by in Mosul.
- (7) Iraqi Police Commandos and U.S. advisers on patrol in Mosul.

- Photos by U.S. Army Sgt. Matt Murphy(1, 2), U.S. Army Sgt. Lorie Jewell (3, 6, 7), and the Department of Defense (4,5).

Airman, Marine Help Iraqi Commandos to Communicate

By U.S. Army Sgt. Matt Murphy — MNSTC-I Public Affairs

SAMARRA, Iraq – Performing joint command, control and communications functions usually brings visions of Soldiers, Airmen, and Marines with various electronics equipment in an office. This is not the case for one U.S. Airman and Marine who found themselves setting up communications during an active combat mission as part of an Iraqi Ministry of Interior operation.

U.S. Air Force Tech Sgt. Billie Lowell and U.S. Marine Corps Capt. Steve Monsour are spending several days working with the Iraqi Security Forces as they clear the city of Samarra and its surrounding villages of insurgents.

Pulling off one of the largest anti-insurgent operations since the operations in Fallujah will not happen without good communications. According to Col. Jim Coffman, a special adviser with the Multi-National Security Transition Command-Iraq, having high frequency radio communications and a repeater that helps transmit signals is essential.

"Watching the Iraqis execute missions is great. Setting up their radios is a small part of the operation, but just being here on a combat mission and witnessing how well coordinated the Iraqi forces perform raids and capture insurgents



U.S. Air Force Tech Sgt. Billie Lowell checks radio communications in an Iraqi Police Commando truck in Samarra, Iraq.
— Photo by U.S. Marine Corps Capt. Steve Monsour



U.S. Air Force Tech Sgt. Billie Lowell and U.S. Marine Corps Capt. Steve Monsour program radios for the Iraqi Police Commandos during operations in Samarra, Iraq.
— Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Matt Murphy

makes it worth getting out of the office," Monsour says.

Monsour, while testing radio frequencies, also had the opportunity to see Iraqi police commandos from the 1st Battalion, 1st Brigade bring suspects into custody during a raid in an outlying village.

"This is a unique experience for me because we rarely have the opportunity to go to the field in the Air Force. This is a side of the war that I otherwise wouldn't see. Providing and coordinating communications for the Iraqi teams is something that is really important for them. The tactics the Iraqis use are constantly changing so good communications is absolutely necessary," Lowell says.

As a female in combat, Lowell also experienced programming a radio during a raid mission to hone in frequencies to provide better communications for the ISF teams.

An Iraqi officer on the mission complimented Lowell for the job she did with the radios. He said his ability to talk to his teams maintained order during times they needed to change directions and pursue another course of action.



U.S. Marine Corps Capt. Steve Monsour installs a radio and repeater antenna on top of a building for Police Commando operations in Samarra, Iraq.
— Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Matt Murphy

Samarra Citizens Support Commando Operations

By U.S. Army Sgt. Matt Murphy — MNSTC-I Public Affairs

SAMARRA, Iraq — In the days since Iraqi forces rolled into the city to sweep out insurgents, Samarra citizens are showing support for the operation by streaming to local checkpoints to personally deliver information to help the mission along.

Citizens are also flooding the telephone lines to the office of Iraqi Gen. Adnan Thabit, security adviser to the Ministry of Interior, to express their gratitude for the show of force and tips on insurgent activity.

More than 1,500 members of Iraqi police forces — police commandos, a local public order battalion and local police forces — arrived in the city March 4.

Iraqi-led patrols have netted more than 80 suspects so far, officials said.

"The people of Samarra used to be afraid of the anti-Iraqi forces," said Iraqi Gen. Rashid, commander of the 1st Brigade police commandos. "They couldn't tell us any information. Now their fear is gone."

Rashid said one citizen offered information about 17 targets, and in some cases, citizens personally led force members to suspects.

"Citizens say when we see the commandos work hard, we want to bring information about the terrorists," Rashid said.

Of the suspects in custody, officials have confirmed 38 as active anti-Iraqi forces. Three have been identified as leaders of a terrorist cell in Samarra, responsible for the



During a Police Commando patrol in Samarra, Iraq, a crowd of citizens gathered for an impromptu meeting to discuss insurgent activity in the area.

— Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Matt Murphy

deaths of 11 Iraqi police officers, seven Iraqi soldiers, three interpreters and two contractors, officials said. In addition, two primary leaders confessed their roles in burning Iraqi citizens' homes, building two improvised explosive devices that hit U.S. tanks and three other IEDs that hit U.S. Humvees.

"The success of the police and the patrols is not enough," Adnan said, adding that he also wants to bring feelings of safety and security back to the people of Samarra.

Rashid said he will be leaving additional forces in place to maintain security and assist local Samarra police when the operation draws to a close.



The Advisor

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Appropriate submissions include the important developments in your section / unit that would be of interest to our readership, comments on the newsletter, experiences, etc.



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Iraqi Security Forces News Briefs

Iraqi police, Coalition Forces defend patrol

BAGHDAD, Iraq – A small arms attack, March 7, on an Iraqi logistics convoy and the coalition patrol escorting it brought help from both Iraqi police units in the area and a quick-reaction force unit from the 3rd Infantry Division.

Three attackers were killed in the defense of the convoy and three vehicles confiscated, according to multinational forces reports. Inside the vehicles, Soldiers and Iraqi police found several weapons and munitions – including nine mortar rounds, a mortar launching tube, seven rocket-propelled grenades and two launchers, a hand grenade, several hundred rounds of ammunition and a bayonet.

Officials described the joint response as an example of the mutual support between Iraqi and coalition forces.

Joint raids net suspected insurgents, cache

MOSUL, Iraq – Coalition and Iraqi forces executed several joint raids March 5 that resulted in the capture of 17 suspected insurgents and a large bounty of weapons and ammunition, according to a multinational forces report.

Elements of the Iraqi Army and the Police Force's Emergency Response Unit joined coalition Soldiers on the raids in Mosul that uncovered two separate caches. The largest included four anti-aircraft missiles, 116 rocket-propelled grenades and 11 launchers, five AK-47 automatic rifles, more than 200,000 rounds of ammunition, several complete mortar systems of various sizes and several dozen rockets.

The caches also contained 225 blasting caps, 75 hand grenades, several hundred pounds of explosive propellant, four boxes of materials used for making improvised explosive devices, radios, telephones, night vision equipment, binoculars, video camera and miscellaneous papers, to include mortar firing tables for Mosul.

Iraqi Army captures insurgents

BAGHDAD, Iraq – Soldiers from the 12th Battalion, 4th Brigade of the Iraqi Army conducted cordon and search operations in Ninevah province this week detaining 28 suspects, seizing 30 weapons, and confiscating anti-Iraqi forces propaganda.

The suspected insurgents have been taken to Al Kasik Military Base for interrogation.

Concurrently the Iraqi Army's 19th Battalion, 8th Brigade conducted cordon and search operations in Ayn Zalah. They succeeded in detaining five suspects all of whom were arrested by local security forces. Three of the men have subsequently been identified as being on an Iraqi Army most wanted list.

Iraqi Army captures suspects, kidnapper

AR RASHEED, Iraq – The 2nd Battalion, 1st Brigade of the Iraqi Intervention Force, supported by U.S. military forces set up traffic control checkpoints yesterday in Ar Rasheed which netted three suspects.

U.S. military officials said one of the suspects admitted to involvement in kidnappings.

Soldiers nab weapons; deliver pregnant woman to hospital

TAJI, Iraq – Acting on a tip, Iraqi soldiers with the 3rd Battalion, 2nd Brigade confiscated eight rocket-propelled grenades, a launcher, an AK-47 and ammunition and a home-made mortar March 8.

In an unrelated incident, a woman on the verge of giving birth showed up at the Iraqi military base and military personnel gave her a ride to a local hospital.

Iraqi soldiers of the 8th Battalion, 2nd Brigade discovered 122 rockets and small arms ammunition later the same day.

Iraqi soldiers find large weapons cache

FALLUJAH, Iraq – Iraqi soldiers patrolling areas near the city captured five suspected insurgents and a large cache of weapons and materials used in making improvised explosive devices.

Members of the 18th Battalion, 7th Brigade, 5th Division confiscated the weapons and materials during March 5 patrols.

Included in the cache was several rifles and ammunition, artillery shells, two AK-47 automatic rifles, four sets of body armor, a Kevlar helmet, a cordless telephone set, batteries, anti-Iraqi and American propaganda materials.

Third Public Order Brigade graduates

NUMANIYAH, Iraq - Iraqi Police graduated 1,121 Public Order Battalion officers March 10. The officers completed an intensive six-week training program conducted at the Civil Intervention Force Academy at Numaniyah Military Base.

The Iraqi Minister of Interior has turned to the Public Order Police to act as a bridging force in cities where the police force has not yet been established or will be reconstituted due to insurgency activity. They provide a critical security presence, maintaining law and order, to ensure the safety and security of the local populace.

"The men of the 3rd Public Order Brigade impressed their trainers throughout the six weeks with their dedication and sense of purpose. The officer chain of command for this brigade is particularly strong. This unit is committed to the safety of the Iraqi people and will serve well, especially in troubled regions in need of reinforcing police forces," said Lt. Col. Ted Westhusing, program manager, counter-terrorism special operations, for the Civilian Police Assistance Training Team.

Officers attending the course came from areas throughout Iraq and will be deployed to their respective assignments following graduation. More than 2,200 officers who previously completed the course have been outfitted, equipped and deployed in support of security operations.

Insurgency Weakening; Iraqi Security Forces Growing Stronger

By Terri Lukach — American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON – As the second anniversary of Operation Iraqi Freedom approaches, efforts to help the Iraqi people transition to a constitutionally elected government by the end of 2005 are on track, insurgents are failing in their efforts to break the will of the Iraqi people, and Iraqi security forces “are doing a magnificent job,” the U.S. general in charge of coalition forces in Iraq said this week.

“Jan. 30, 2005 (election day in Iraq), was a great day for the Iraqi people, for the coalition, and for Iraqi security forces,” said U.S. Army Gen. George W. Casey Jr., commander of Multinational Force Iraq, during a news conference at the Pentagon.

“On that day, more than 8 million people exercised their right to choose their government, many for the first time in their lives,” he said. “Insurgents tried their best to cause them to fail but were unable to crack the indomitable spirit of the Iraqi people or the cordons of the Iraqi security forces.”

Casey said the insurgents are tough and aggressive, but they are not “10 feet tall.” They continue to murder, he said, and also continue to offer no positive vision for Iraq, only intimidation and subjugation -- a message that is “resonating less and less with the Iraqi people.”

As proof, Casey noted that while insurgents vowed to disrupt the elections, they were unable to breach a single polling center. “We took away their options and relegated them to drive-by shootings, ineffective indirect fire, and a few suicide attacks,” he said.

Of the roughly 300 attacks that took place on election day, “maybe 70 percent were ineffective,” Casey said. He added that the level of violence has also dropped significantly in the post-election period, with last week marking the lowest level of attacks since April 2004.

Casey had high praise for Iraqi security forces, saying they

are growing in competency as well as numbers. Today there are more than 142,000 trained and equipped Iraqi troops and more than 96 operational combat battalions engaged across Iraq, both with coalition forces and, in some cases, independently.

“They continue to get stronger every day,” Casey said. “The election success was a great boost not only to their own self-confidence, but to the Iraqi people’s confidence in them.”

Casey said that while much work remains to be done, reconstruction in Iraq also continues to go forward. In June, there were just under 200 building projects under way. They were valued at about \$1 billion in total. Today, he said, there are more than 2,000 projects under way, valued at about \$5 billion.

Casey noted that three of the four U.S. units extended in Iraq to help ensure the success of the Iraqi elections have now been redeployed, and other units will leave Iraq on schedule at the end of March. “The contribution of those units was invaluable,” he said.

The general said the American people can take great pride in the performance of U.S. military men and women in both the months leading up to election day as well as on the day itself.

“They performed brilliantly in Fallujah, north Babil, Mosul, Salahuddin, and Baghdad -- all difficult places where Iraqis took advantage of the security they provided to go out and vote,” Casey said.

He also had a message for the families of servicemembers “who made the ultimate sacrifice.”

“Your loved ones were part of something profound on the 30th of January, something that has the potential to change the political face, not only of Iraq, but of the Middle East,” he said. “We thank them for their sacrifices. They made a difference.”

Iraqi Security Forces News Briefs Continued . . .

Iraqi Police graduate 81 from advanced training courses

BAGHDAD, Iraq – The Iraqi Police Service graduated 81 police officers from advanced and specialty courses at the Adnan Training Facility March 10 as part of the Iraqi government’s ongoing effort to train its security forces.

The courses consist of Basic Criminal Investigations with 38 graduates, Incident Command System with 17 graduates and Violent Crimes Investigation course with 26 graduates.

The Basic Criminal Investigation course covers topics such as theft, burglary, arson, robbery, sexual offenses, and homicide investigation. Participants also receive instruction and hands-on training in fingerprinting, photogra-

phy, tool marks and plaster casting techniques. More than 1,200 police officers have previously completed the Basic Criminal Investigations course.

Incident Command teaches first response techniques to a crime or accident scene, how to coordinate agencies responding to the scene and managing assets at the scene. Approximately 187 officers have previously graduated from this course.

The Violent Crimes Investigation course introduces participants to investigative techniques to be used in a variety of situations, but particularly in violent crimes against persons (armed robbery, rape and murder).

Officers who participated in these courses previously completed either an 8-week basic training course for new recruits or a 3-week ‘transitional integration program’ course designed for prior-service officers.

British Delegation Visits Iraqi Military Academy

By U.S. Army Sgt. Lorie Jewell — MNSTC-I Public Affairs

BAGHDAD, Iraq – A member of the British Parliament got a first-hand look recently at the progress being made in developing Iraqi military officers at an academy modeled after Britain's Sandhurst Royal Military Academy.



Members of a British delegation tour the grounds of the Iraqi Military Academy.

— Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Allen Thomas

The Right Honorable Ian Duncan Smith, former leader of the Conservative Party and a Sandhurst alumnus, toured the Iraqi Military Academy in Al Rustamiyah on March 5 with Edward Chaplin, British Ambassador to Iraq; Lord Michael Ashcroft and Brig. David Clements, deputy commanding general of the Multi-National Security Transition Command – Iraq.

Britain built the Iraqi academy, also known as IMAR, in 1924 and maintained ties until 1990. It was abandoned in January 2003 and suffered some damage and major looting during, and after the war. The U.S. Army occupied it from mid-2003 until it was handed over to MNSTC-I and its Coalition Military Assistance Training Team in March 2004. Reconstruction started two months later.

With a 17 million pound (\$32.7 million) budget – and another 10 to 15 million pounds (\$19.2-\$28.9 million) expected to be spent on reconstruction – the academy is designed to educate and train future officers in a high-quality

facility that features barracks capable of housing up to 810 cadets and 56 staff, an air conditioned gymnasium, a 50-meter swimming pool and a large bakery.

Cadets will spend one year at the academy before graduating. The current class of 95 cadets started in January; two more classes will start in May and by September, three more will begin. Cadets will go through 710 separate lessons on topics like leadership, doctrine, principles of war, marksmanship, tactics and communications and 14 major field training exercises.

Smith, who was on a fact-finding mission, was impressed with the progress of the academy. He expressed enthusiasm for how the academy's aspirations mirror that of Britain's politicians.

The academy's objectives include:

- Developing commanders who possess the courage, willpower and temperament to take decisive action to achieve the mission in difficult and dangerous circumstances.
- Foster attitudes of integrity, commitment, self-sacrifice and mutual trust that results in standards of behavior that promote military effectiveness.
- Enable officer cadets to think and communicate as commanders and foster a deep interest and care for soldiers under their command.
- Achieve a grounding in military doctrine and understand its significance in all forms of conflict.
- Encourage the analysis of strategic and war studies as a foundation to military thought and wisdom.
- Train officer cadets in the basic skills and battlefield disciplines of soldiering.

The principles that will be taught throughout the year-long course include:

- Respect for Iraqi democracy.
- Respect for human rights.
- Integration of all elements of Iraqi society.
- An intellectual and academic approach to training in addition to the military leadership training.



(Left) The Iraqi Military Academy. (Right) Iraqi Soldiers participate in physical fitness testing in the IMAR gym.

— Photos by U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Allen Thomas

Iraqi and U.S. Soldiers Find Weapons Warehouse

MNSTC-I Public Affairs

AL JEDEDA, Iraq – Iraqi Army forces from the 22nd Battalion, supported by U.S. forces, acted on information from informants and captured insurgents which led them to an enormous weapons warehouse filled with explosives, weapons, and munitions, March 7 in Al Jededa.

The warehouse contained more than 200,000 small arms rounds, 13 rifles of various types, 11 rocket propelled grenade launchers, 116 rocket propelled grenades, 110 RPG booster rockets, nine complete mortar systems, 610 60mm mortar rounds, 208 82mm mortar rounds, 152 120mm mortar rounds, 11 122mm artillery rounds, 59 57mm rockets, two 107mm rockets, and one 73mm rocket.

In addition, the soldiers found 225 blasting caps, more than 50 pounds of plastic explosives, detonation cord, timed fuses, 75 hand grenades, more than 1,800 pounds of explosive propellant, four boxes of improvised explosive device making materials, and radios and base station phones.

The warehouse also contained maps, phone numbers, diagrams, and the owner's identification along with some video equipment.

The warehouse is located 500 meters away from a previous weapons cache find in late February 2005.

According to military officials, the warehouse, weapons, and explosives belong to a terrorist cell which is very active in the area.



(1) Iraqi and U.S. soldiers stack and sort explosives and weapons found at a warehouse in Al Jededa. (2) An Iraqi soldier stands near stacks of explosives found at a warehouse in Al Jededa. (3) Stacked mortars and artillery rounds found at a warehouse in Al Jededa. (4) An Iraqi soldier stands near a group of rocket propelled grenade launchers.

— Photos courtesy of the Coalition Military Assistance Training Team

Iraqi and U.S. Soldiers Find Large Weapons Cache in Mosul

MNSTC-I Public Affairs

MOSUL, Iraq – Iraqi military forces from the Iraqi Army's 22nd Battalion, supported by U.S. forces recently participated in a cordon search mission which led to an extremely large weapons cache March 7 in Mosul.

Additionally, 210 blasting caps, 100 feet of detonation cord, 500 feet of timed fuse, multiple phone and radio systems used to detonate improvised explosive devices were also found.

The cache netted 15 130mm artillery rounds rigged in five round bundles and linked with detonation cord and two blasting caps.



(1) Artillery rounds bundled in groups of five were wired and ready to use as an improvised explosive device (IED).

(2) A satellite view of the area in Mosul where the weapons cache was found.

(3) Stacked artillery rounds, electronic equipment, detonation cord and other explosive items.

— Photos courtesy of the Coalition Military Assistance Training Team

Iraqi Police Commandos Patrol Mosul on Foot

By U.S. Army Sgt. Lorie Jewell — MNSTC-I Public Affairs

MOSUL, Iraq— In two staggered columns, one on each side of a busy Mosul street, a group of Iraqi Police Commandos file on foot away from the safety of Forward Operation Base Blickenstaff and into the uncertainty of mid-afternoon rush hour.

They make foot patrols through the streets of Mosul a few times a week, wearing body armor vests, weapons always at the ready.

"These are the street fightin' boys," says U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Chris Paschel, who works with the commandos of the 3rd Battalion, 2nd Brigade with U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Carl Paris. "They are combat tested." Paschel and Paris are Advisory Support Team members for the Multi-National Security Transition Command-Iraq.

On a recent patrol, a group of 25 commandos covered roughly three miles, navigating spots of heavy traffic along a commercial district. At one point, gunshots ringing out in the distance forced them to take cover until it was safe to continue.

Along the route, several motorists and passersby waved hello or stopped to shake the hands of the commandos and their U.S. advisers, Paris and Paschel. On a street with a local elementary school, a cluster of children ran to shake their hands and ask for candy.

The patrols serve several purposes, Paschel and Paris say. It lets the citizens of Mosul see their security forces at work, and it sends the commandos out in search of enemies. A couple of months ago, the group of commandos captured a high-value insurgent who was identified as having beheaded several people in a business they pass by on foot patrols.

When they go out with the commandos, Paschel and Paris do not to give too much direction. The authority for the foot missions is in the hands of the ranking Iraqi officer.

The commandos also go out on coordinated missions. One recent night they set out after dark in search of a man suspected of aiding insurgents. They didn't find him, but they'll keep trying until they do, the advisers say.

"They love missions, they love to capture the bad guys," says Iraqi Police Commando Maj. Heider.

Heider says he is not only proud of his men, but emotionally connected as well.

"They aren't my company, they are my family," says Heider.

Unit cohesion is one of their biggest strengths, Paris notes. So is courage.

"They're not afraid to engage a target," says Paris. "They will go into a fight. And they're very loyal to each other. They'll take casualties before they run away."



Police Commando patrol on foot in Mosul, Iraq.
— Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Lorie Jewell

Paschel and Paris have been working with the battalion since November. In that time, seven commandos have been killed in action and dozens wounded. Three suffered gunshot wounds to the chest in one day at a traffic control point, Paschel said.

But like all good things, there is always room for improvement.

"They really need an NCO corps," says Paschel, adding that work sometimes slows while a decision makes its way through the officer corps.

Still, the U.S. Soldiers have seen plenty of improvement since they started working with the commandos.

Navigating through traffic in Mosul can be treacherous. They travel in pickup trucks, marked in blue to signify police, with two or three commandos riding with their weapons in the open back. Lights and sirens blare continuously, alerting other motorists to get out of the way.

Earlier in the day of their most recent foot patrol, the same commandos made two trips to a forward operating base to pick up boxes of T-shirts, socks, underwear and other uniform items for the battalion. Other than navigating through several traffic tie-ups, the trips were uneventful. On the way back from a third outing, however, the convoy took fire from a building less than a mile away from their base.

As Paschel and the other drivers sped away, Paris and several commandos returned fire. No one was injured.

Both advisers say they have confidence in the commandos and their ability to confront the enemy.

"They hate the terrorists just as much as we do, sometimes maybe more," says Paris. "That's a foundation for trust for me." Paschel agrees.

"I've lived with them for the past two months or so and have been on so many missions, I feel comfortable with them," he says. "I'd go out with them just as quickly as I'd go out with any U.S. Soldier. They're just another soldier to me."